

To whomever it may concern:

My name is Delia Gomez and I am a recent graduate of the M.A. program at California State University, Long Beach's Department of History. I am currently a candidate for the single-subject in social science teaching credential program at the same campus. After reviewing Chapter 12: Grade Eight- United States History and Geography: Growth and Conflict, I have compiled some feedback of my own as per my academic and pedagogical training thus far. I hope you will review them with an open mind and find them helpful. Thank you in advance for your time and review.

Overall, I found the course framework for eighth grade history promising and was able to identify the contributors' efforts to align the history classroom with the historical academy. They demonstrate this by using central historical questions as scaffolds for historical thinking skills. Examples of these questions include the larger course question prompting students to contextualize the meaning of "freedom" in the time period under review. Additionally, Students are asked to consider the cause and consequences of major developments such as the Civil War and Westward expansion. I also recognized the focus on fostering important technical skills for the students. These skills include: writing, reading, argumentation, and sourcing primary texts and materials used in the sample lesson plans. Finally, the inclusion of multiple perspectives throughout the course is seminal to aligning the classroom with the professional discipline and is duly addressed in the chapter. An example of this is the use of Oloudah Equiano's first-hand account of his experience of slavery. Unearthing different perspectives helps illuminates the fact that narratives are in fact constructed and have traditionally favored a particular perspective.

The greatest critique I had of the chapter I reviewed was the use of positive terms to describe important processes in American History. "Freedom," "equality," and "liberty" are identified as the primary themes for this course but there is no mention of their corollaries. The history classroom is a unique environment that has the potential to introduce and guide students towards reconciling with difficult realities of American history and life. Using serious and complex terms such as oppression, marginalization, and disenfranchisement can help students understand and navigate important abstract concepts that have had and continue to have material, emotional, economic, social, corporeal, and psychological consequences for many citizens and non-citizens alike. Why are we omitting these terms in a course that ends with an emphasis on citizenship? I believe we also have the time and resources to prime them for global citizenship centered on empathy and respect for others. These terms become increasingly important when students are asked to evaluate the legacy of the Declaration of Independence, appoint them with the terms necessary to do so honestly.

Westward expansion is treated rather traditionally which suits the course's aim at coupling Early American History with Geography. My concern here is that the frontiers and borderlands will also be expressed traditionally, privileging terms such as "discovery" over more nuanced phrases like "cultural contact." This is an important point to consider because of the implications these terms can have for Native American visibility and agency in the historical narrative.

Another concerning feature is the fact that the majority of the primary and secondary materials used in the lessons are textual. I question how our visual learners or ELLs will be able to navigate and remain engaged with the vast majority of content within these sources. This is important because differentiation is an indispensable part of the teaching profession.

Finally, the Civil War is primarily presented through a military lens. While the military chapters of the conflict are most certainly central to this unit, there does exist a well-documented cultural, gendered, and social history of the Civil War. Primary and secondary materials that speak to these facets of the Civil War experience might infuse the unit with greater complexity and significance for our students.

The treatment of prominent individuals is problematic because it puts the course at risk of inflating the agency of the respective persons and marginalizing others in the process. This inflation is demonstrated in the central historical question that prompts students to consider how Andrew Jackson changed America. A more appropriate phrasing might read, "How did the United States and its frontiers change under the Jackson administration?" This is a fair question to ask that makes room for a more nuanced understanding of agency than the original question.

Some of the most forward-thinking aspects of this draft speak to the committee's efforts to graft exciting developments in the contemporary academy. The contextualization of the American Revolution in a global context parallels the work of world historians and globally-oriented Americanists who seek to make meaningful connections that challenge or transgress nation-state borders. The circulation of revolution schemas, Enlightenment ideas, and democratic values is an important topic in this field and is reflected in the aforementioned unit of the draft under review. Additionally, the unit on the history of education is exciting because it has the potential to surface greater meaning of education for our students.

Despite the fact that I have expressed numerous points of concern on my behalf according to my professional and academic preparation, nevertheless, I recognize this draft as a positive and exciting step in the right direction. I hope the respective party or individuals find my suggestions interesting and constructive. Thank you again for your time.

Respectfully yours,
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